

# VALERINA DORIZZI

I have had asthma most of my life, which caused me to have heavy breathing for as long as I can remember. It wasn't until the early 1990s that I received medication to help me with the condition. For the past 20 years, I have been a diabetic which has its own challenges and led to a minor heart attack in 2008 which required a stent to be put in a year later. Within the past 10 years, I have also developed osteoarthritis.

I feel knowing and understanding how to self-manage my health allows me to make choices that will continue to support my health and wellbeing, whether it's self-support or calling on support from health services.

The two hospitals I have attended for my health conditions are Royal Perth Hospital and Midland St John of God Public Hospital. I also visit other health services and programs which provide me with support, including Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service, Mooditj Djena, Moorditj Koort, and People Who Care.

I also see a diabetic educator every three months which provides me with knowledge to help me manage my health. I also participate in a program called Heart Health Program which provides health education, an exercise regime conducted by physiotherapists and a healthy lunch provided every Thursday.

I now attend an exercise program provided by Moorditj Koort.



I also see a counsellor at Yorgum. I feel good talking to the counsellor as I'm starting to believe in myself and am building up my self-esteem which has helped with my overall wellbeing.

I am also part of the Aboriginal Health Community Advisory Groups (AHCAG). I feel this group has been good for my health as we get to review and discuss information about health and the health services, and we support each other in the community, which is good and encourages me to get out and about to stay mentally healthy.

I often show my kids and grandkids that living healthy means a good life, and that you live longer. As you get older, you will have the younger ones looking up to you.

I encourage my grandkids to stay mentally and physically healthy through many activities, including taking them for a walk in the bush and passing on my knowledge and culture.

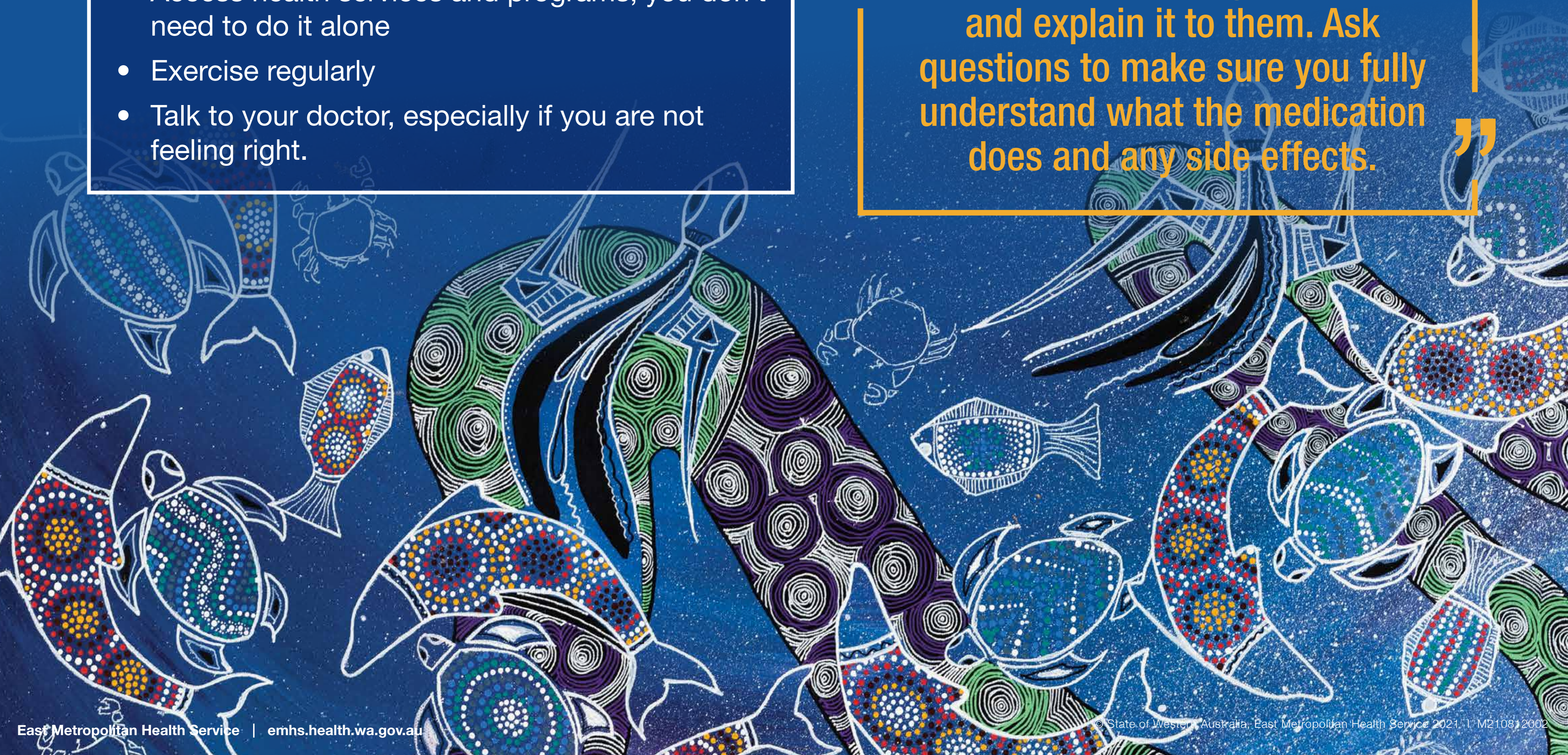
To manage and support myself, I take my medication and if I'm not sure about one or I need to change it, I talk to my doctor. I also exercise regularly which has helped a lot with my mobility. My sisters support me a lot with my health and we all check in with each other.

I also get a lot of support from my church, health services and friends and family which helps me know that I am not forgotten and that there are people thinking about me.

### Three tips to managing your health condition:

- Access health services and programs, you don't need to do it alone
- Exercise regularly
- Talk to your doctor, especially if you are not feeling right.

**Get that education on medication and illness. Talk to your doctor and explain it to them. Ask questions to make sure you fully understand what the medication does and any side effects.**







# KEVIN FITZGERALD

I was diagnosed with diabetes at the age of 60, so I haven't had it too long. When I was younger, I didn't take much notice of my health. I thought I was big enough and strong enough, so I continued to eat anything and drink anything and I was known to sometimes have a midnight snack.

My blood glucose would reach high levels, sometimes reaching 18, and sometimes going as high as 30, which was not good. My doctor asked me if I wanted to live, saying that if I did I would have to start losing weight and eating properly.

A couple of operations for my urinary system, put me on the straight and narrow. I have now lost weight, and my blood glucose levels are measuring at 7.

I'm not on painkillers anymore, I don't suffer with headaches and my body doesn't ache like it used to.

I'm also walking a lot more and I generally feel a lot better within myself.

I have worked for 51 years and only recently retired. Although I'm retired, I keep busy by doing Welcome to Country, storytelling, and being the Chairperson of an Elders group for Balladong country.

My partner and I like to be independent and get to our appointments ourselves, however, if I need support, I call on our kids and the Aboriginal Acute Care Coordination Team at Royal Perth Hospital (RPH).

Diabetes has been a real challenge for me. Over time I have come to understand that I must eat healthy foods, stay physically active and regularly check my blood glucose levels. There was a time when I would eat a whole loaf of bread and six chops. Now I have one piece of meat and salad.

I now eat a lot of salad and two pieces of fruit each day. I don't see myself on a diet, I'm just eating proper. I believe I am managing my chronic condition well, as both my partner and I want to have a better quality of life.

I have a good doctor at Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service. I go there for all my general healthcare appointments. I also like Royal Perth Hospital. They also have good doctors. They tell me everything I need to know, including what is going to happen and why it is going to happen.

I am learning all the time about diabetes. I'm not an expert, however, I am taking in information all the time from health professionals which allows me to make informed decisions. This is why I take my medicine regularly, attend appointments and make healthy lifestyle choices.

Aboriginal people can make changes to their lifestyle and manage their chronic condition just as I have, if they put their mind to it.



### Three tips to managing your health condition:

- Be physically active
- Ask health professionals lots of questions
- Eat healthy foods, you might like it.

**If you want a better life you need to eat healthily, get away from the computers, do some exercise, get into some sports association and you will go a long way, that is for all kids in Perth today.**







# RAELENE HAYWARD

I have lived with Lupus for the past 23 years. When I was diagnosed at the age of 21, I didn't know how to manage it as I didn't know what Lupus was at the time. Back then, there wasn't a lot of awareness about it. The disease ended up affecting my kidneys which led to other chronic illnesses. I was told by health professionals that I have end of stage 5 kidney failure.

The health service and programs that help to support my healthcare are Armadale Hospital, Moorditj Djena, Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service (DYHS), and Arche Health. I especially utilise the Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers at Armadale hospital who regularly come to see me during my appointments which has been good moral support and they are excellent supports in navigating the health system.

To maintain my wellbeing, I regularly cook not just for myself but for family and friends - it's a passion of mine. Being involved, eating healthily and staying physically active helps me have a healthy mind which is so important.

As a family, we go bush walking often which allows us to share our knowledge with the younger generation. We also go to the park and play basketball, and I also do a lot of artwork. Getting involved in little things like that helps to keep me healthy as it clears my mind and motivates me to look after myself. By being active, I feel I am able to give so much more to my family and the community.

I try to incorporate these strategies into my life each and every day as well as using the health services to help me manage my chronic health condition.

My faith and my church family also play a vital role in my spiritual wellbeing and that helps me to manage my health.



Keeping connected to family and friends is important and helps me manage during difficult times. I will often call on my family, friends and extended community members. I get a lot of phone calls from friends and family to see how I am going. Being connected has had a positive impact on my health.

For me, connection is not only with the relationships around me, but also a connection to the land and our culture.

I am a member of the Aboriginal Health Community Advisory Groups (AHCAGs) which is facilitated by the Aboriginal Health Strategy team. I feel the AHCAGs, along with Moorditj Djena, DYHS and Arche Health, provide a connection with the community which allows us to easily get the information we need to continue to support our health and wellbeing.

Just knowing that there are many free services available for me, with some even offering transportation, takes the stress out of getting to appointments and strain off the family.

The support provided helps with your wellbeing as the worst thing is staying ignorant. Knowledge is good.

### Three tips to managing your health condition:

- Keep physically and mentally active
- Talk to a health professional if you are not feeling right
- Share your health story with family and friends. Knowledge is key.

“  
Prevention is  
better than cure.  
”







# ROSEANNE MICHAEL

The chronic health conditions I experience are diabetes, epilepsy and mental illness. I've had epilepsy for 10 years and have learned to balance it with medication. I have also had depression for a very long time and I am taking medication to keep it at bay. I was also recently diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes.

I go to Wungening Aboriginal Corporation for counselling. They are connected to a lot of services that help Aboriginal people manage all aspects of their lives such as health, housing, and the legal system. I also attend various appointments at Royal Perth Hospital. These services have helped me manage my health and have exposed me to other services to further support me on my health journey. Through the Aboriginal Health Community Advisory Group (AHCAG), I have learnt more about my health conditions, and have learnt about the different regions of the Elders, including the different areas, different names and even the different colours for the regions. This so inspirational to me.

I manage and support my health by eating more fruit, wholegrains and reduce my sugar intake. I do a lot of walking now, and I also go to the beach for my

spiritual healing. I also spend time with my kids and grandchildren. This time spent together is all part of healing, which is all part of being strong.

The love between family is important: connecting through laughter, love and sharing stories- family is everything. Community is just as important, it is the place where we live, and if we don't look after our family and the community, no matter what culture, then what's going to happen to us in the future? We need to look after ourselves and our land so we can continue to look after our health and pass on our culture to the next generation.

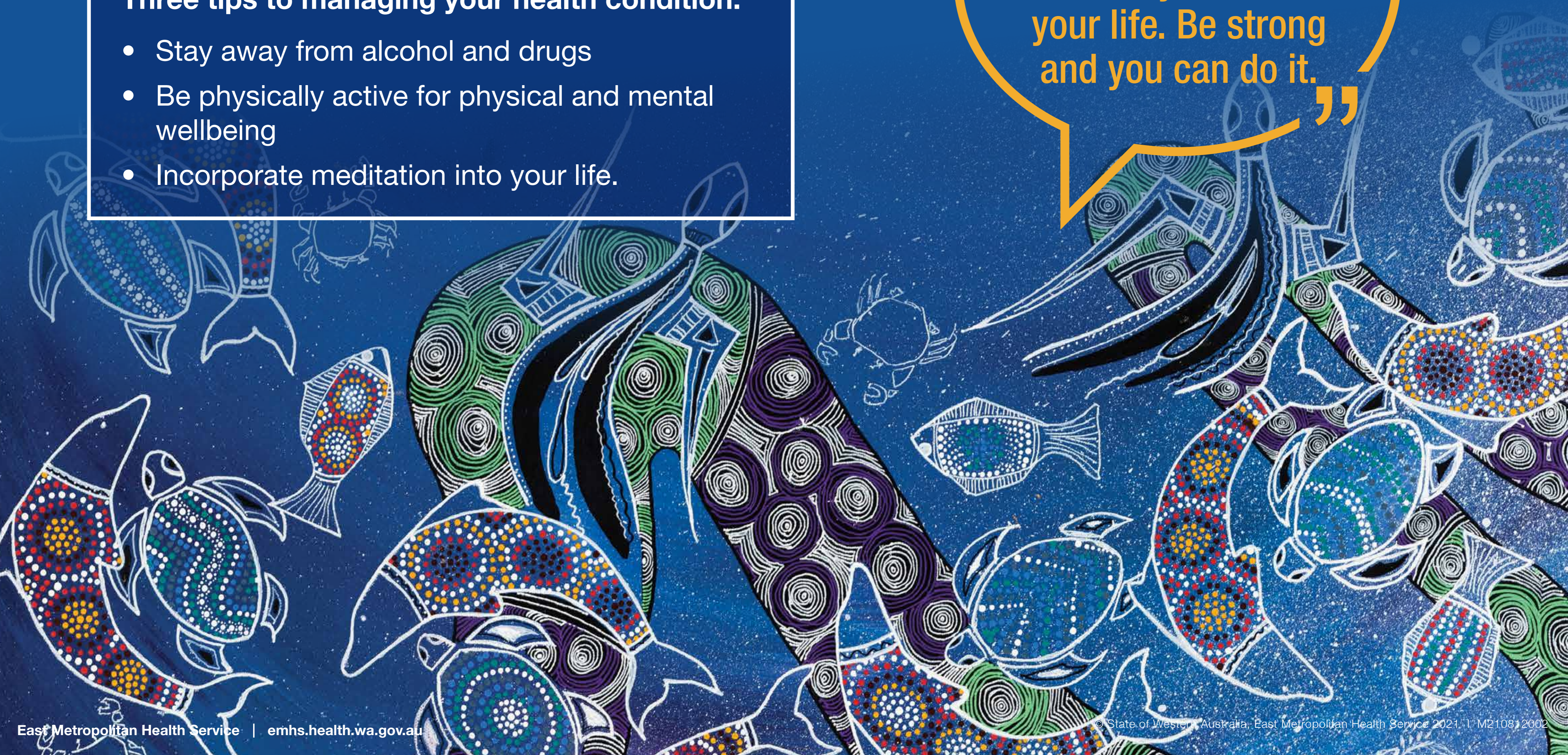
Working with East Metropolitan Health Service has taught me a lot about my health conditions, and has helped me recognise how to look after my own health. All the Elders on the Elder's committee – they are all very strong Elders. When us Elders are together, it's about hearing all our family's stories, the talks and discussions we have, as we're all very open and honest with each other. We support each other through our individual health journeys as no one's journey is the same.



### Three tips to managing your health condition:

- Stay away from alcohol and drugs
- Be physically active for physical and mental wellbeing
- Incorporate meditation into your life.

**“You can accomplish anything, your dreams for what you want in your life. Be strong and you can do it.”**







# LESTER MORRISON

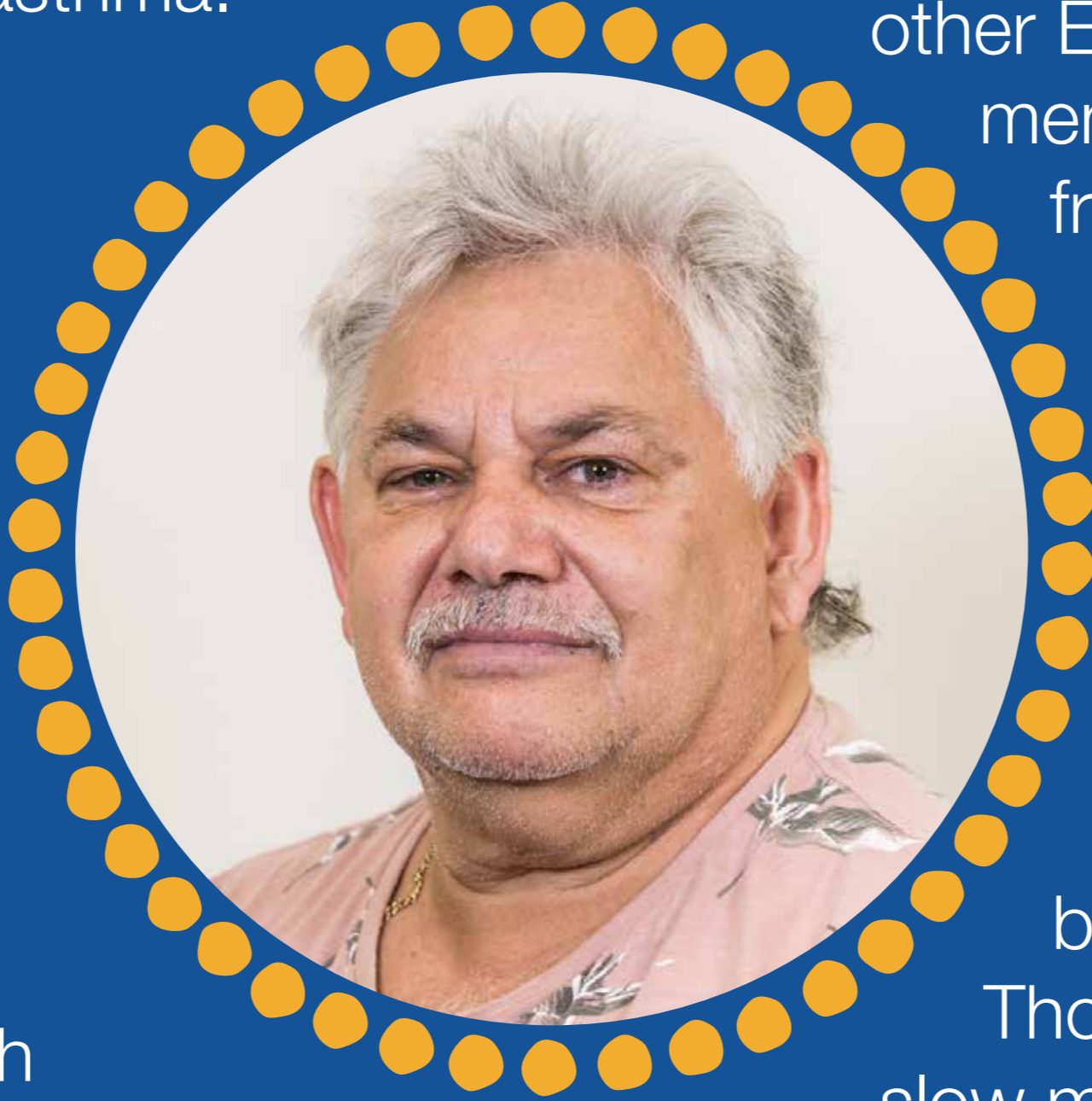
I've had asthma since I was a child. I find it hard sometimes to do things unless I take my medication, which has allowed me to get out and about. I thought I wouldn't make it as a child because I really suffered with my asthma.

I remember when my siblings and I were young, we would lie on compost mattresses and I could not breathe at all. I used to get shouted at by my brother all the time, because I would be breathing really heavily. Back then, my mother didn't realise what asthma was and how to get treatment.

I now manage my asthma well with medication and by keeping physically and mentally active.

I have worked on the mines as an operator for 30 years, but in 2017 I suffered a neck injury which resulted from my employment and I haven't been able to work since.

My overall health has been going well lately. I try to do a lot of activities. If I find that the activities are getting difficult, I'll stop and have a rest. I do a lot of woodwork in my shed – I make stools and coffee tables as odd jobs for people, so that keeps me active every day. And of course, I like gardening. I'm often outside pruning trees and mowing my



lawn. I have a good relationship with my doctor and chemist to ensure I have my medication available.

I enjoy getting out and connecting with my family and community which I do through meeting with other Elders, going to community functions, mentoring and teaching young boys from Cecil Andrews High School how to clean and prepare didgeridoos, watching and playing sports with my grandchildren and sharing stories. I feel good doing it, knowing that my family has accepted me that way, and that I can do things for myself. I like to be self-reliant and stay active, but I'm aware that I have limitations. Though I do not let my health conditions slow me down.

I get health support from Mooditj Djena, Armadale Health Service and Aboriginal Health Community Advisory Group (AHCAG). I look forward to attending the AHCAG meetings as you get to meet different people and give back, which benefits the community through improving the healthcare services and programs for Aboriginal people.

“  
**Stay healthy, eat healthily. Do a lot of sport activities.**  
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### Three tips to managing your health condition:

- Staying connected with family and community
- Listen to your body – be active, rest and seek help when you need to
- Always see your GP for annual checks.





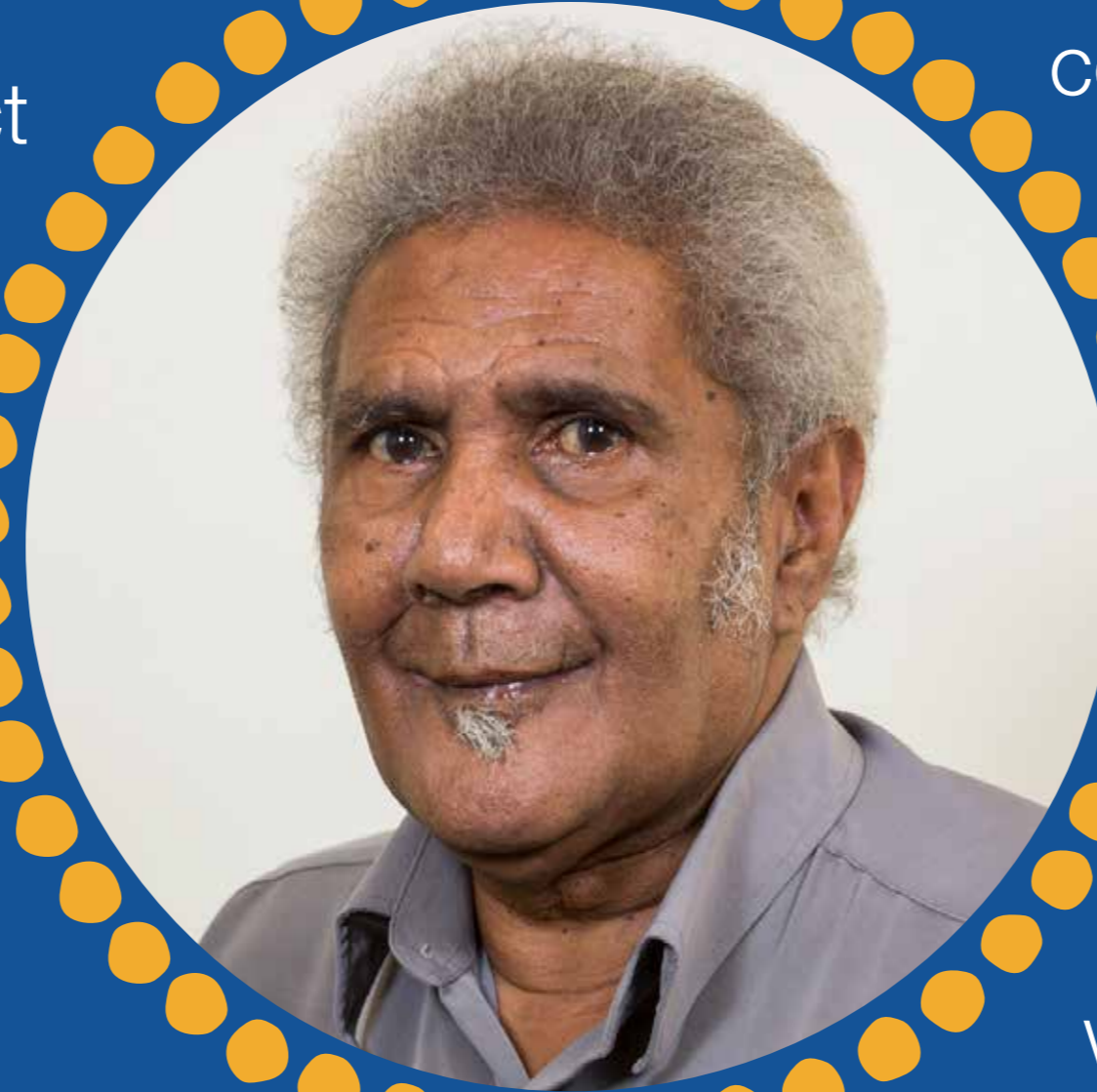


# BERNARD RILEY

I was born in Pingelly and moved to Perth with my parents. We lived on the fringes in Leederville and West Perth in the 60s and 70s. Coming from the bush, Perth was a culture shock for me.

I have learned a lot about the jail system. There, I learned self-respect from Elders in the prison and I realised it was good for the Elders to come in to help the young people to learn about prison life. I was tagged a prisoner but through counselling in mental health I was able to let go of that tag.

I am a very different person now to the person I used to be. I have become an educated and respected man. I have completed a diploma in counselling through Marr Mooditj Training Aboriginal Corporation and am able to draw from my experiences and education to help young people who are walking on a similar path to the one I was on in my earlier days. There is a need for more Aboriginal counsellors to help our people.



I have Type 2 Diabetes and heart disease, with stents and implants to manage it. I've had three heart attacks and a stroke. I treated these as a wakeup call and believe I've been given a second chance. I've experienced all of these conditions in the past three years. To manage these conditions, I receive physiotherapy treatments through Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital once a month, and check-ups with a heart doctor every three months.

My overall health lately has been good. I've been keeping on top of the mental health side of things in the way of accepting life as it is and getting on with it. I do this to also stay strong for my family. The things I do to support my health include getting plenty of exercise, engaging with my community and a having healthy diet.

### Three tips to managing your health condition:

- Stay connected with your family and build good community networks
- Share stories about your medical conditions and plan strategies to support your health
- Exercise and eat healthy food

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Get regular health check-ups no matter what your age.  
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# KERRY THORNE

I had breast cancer in 2002, and although I have been cleared for 18 years, this condition resulted in me developing lymphodema which affects my day-to-day living. I also have osteoarthritis and has been getting worst over the last few years.

The last 15 months has been a roller coaster for me. I had hospital visits every couple of weeks, but due to the current health climate, many of my appointments which have been cancelled or rescheduled.

I spend a lot of time caring for my family members when they aren't well, and when I got sick, it made caring for others difficult. So, if I want to continue to care for my family, I have to look after myself and get the help I need to get well again.

I believe living well and healthy means taking care of myself and my environment. I achieve this by getting involved with things that are going on in the community such as interacting with neighbours, community meetings, activities, and catching up with friends and family and the grannies.

I have very close friends who help and support each other. These relationships are highly important to me to help me manage my health. My friends are always there to help me when I need it, like to get

groceries or pick me up if I need a lift, even when they have full-time jobs and families too. Even my neighbour would drop things over to help me.

I go to Bentley Hospital, Royal Perth Hospital and the local medical centre. The specialist referrals have helped to identify what help I need, and I ask a lot of questions to get as much information as possible.

Knowledge is important to make informed health choices to continue to live a healthy life and manage any health concerns.

How I manage my health is to find out and ask questions if something isn't right. It is important to be more aware of your own health- what's going on, what's wrong with you, asking questions and not being afraid to do so. I will sometimes get a second opinion, especially if it doesn't sit right with me. I try to tell my family and friends not to be complacent as this doesn't help you, and I'm trying to teach the younger generation a different way of going about things, especially when it comes to your health.



### Three tips to managing your health condition:

- Ask for help
- Don't be shy, ask questions, get a second opinion
- Have a good support network.

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**Be connected to family, friends or community groups to stay mentally well.**  
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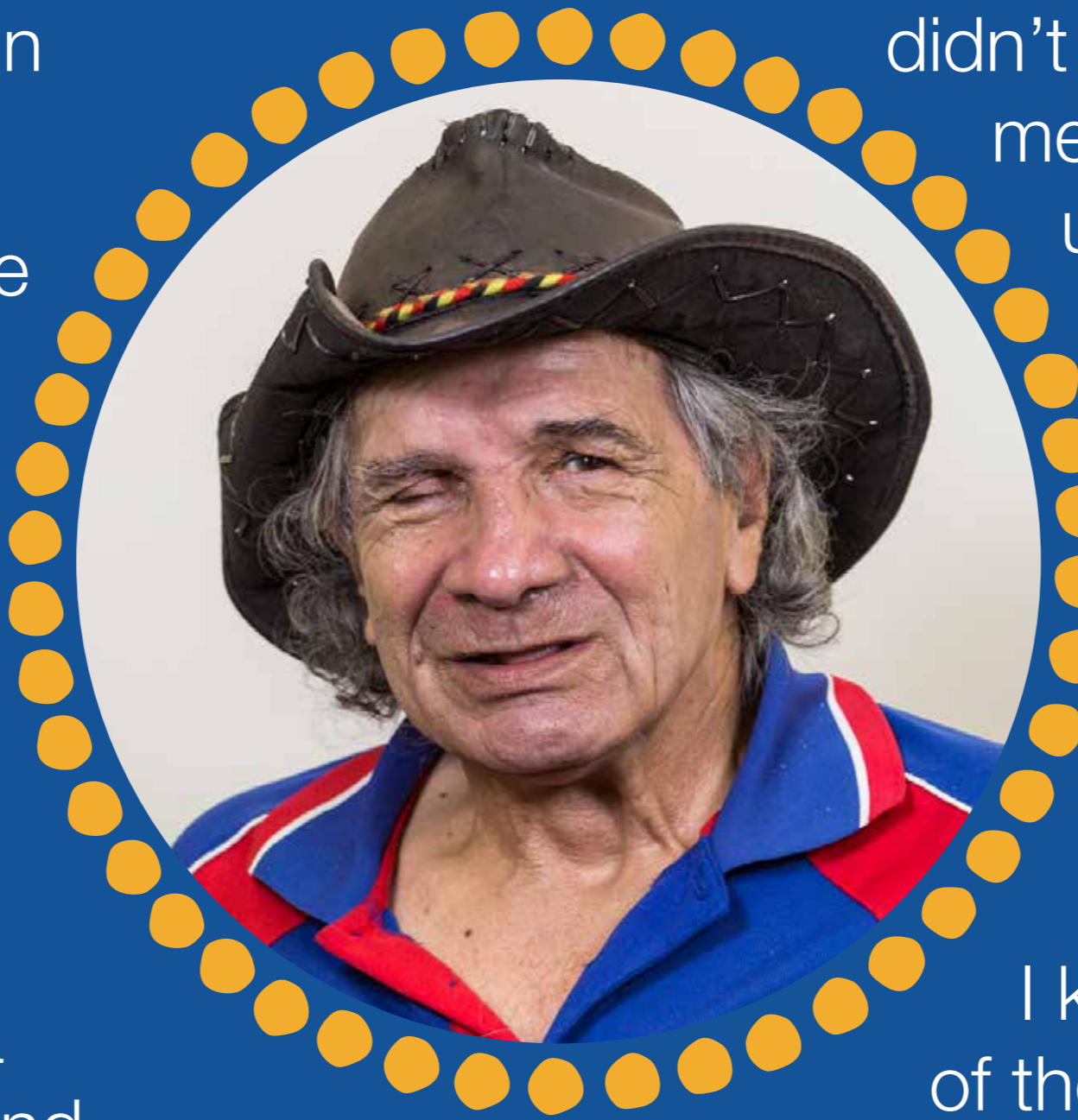


# REX WRIGHT

I do a variety of things to stay healthy, from focusing on good food, to surrounding myself with good people. I believe that having self-respect is a part of being healthy. I also believe in showing respect to everyone and being active within the community.

A chronic disease that I experience is varicose veins. I use bush medicine to look after my symptoms. I also have severe arthritis, which I manage through regular exercise.

What helped me to get started on my health journey was attending the Heart Health Program. I saw a lot of older people trying to walk and do the exercises, so I thought if they can do well so can I. From these sessions I have learnt to walk longer distances by walking everyday and getting stronger and stronger. I have also been trying to quit smoking. It has been a struggle. Eating well is also important and I try to eat healthy. By the end of the year, my goals are to stand on one foot without support and be a non-smoker.



I see podiatry services through Mooditj Djena and Moorditj Koort in Midland to look after my feet, and Silver Chain visit me at home once a week. I wasn't used to receiving help or assistance at first and I didn't accept it. However, they have helped me with a lot, like how to do wall push-ups safely. I now have my own exercise routine.

I have been a part of the Royal Perth and Inner-City Aboriginal Health Community Advisory Group (AHCAG). An unexpected positive outcome from attending these meetings is the socialising aspect and I keep in contact with other members of the group. Participating with the group encourages me to make positive changes.

**You have to believe in yourself. Believe that you can do it and then try to keep doing it until you can. I would like to say – don't give up on your dreams.**

### Three tips to managing your health condition:

- Be active across all areas – physically and socially
- Remove negative thoughts or actions from your life
- Maintain a well-balanced diet.







# GAIL WYNNE

I was living a fast working life. I had to eat at a certain time each day and my meals were usually quick and easy but not always that healthy. I never had time for myself. I didn't make the right food choices and my blood glucose levels were all over the place. I had high blood pressure and my arteries were starting to clog up. This led to me developing diabetes and a heart condition.

I have had diabetes for over 20 years and the heart condition for about six years. I started to feel my health deteriorate, but since I had a stent put in, I've gained my health back and now feel as good as I did eight years ago.

I see a heart specialist at Royal Perth Hospital (RPH) who is wonderful. I interact with the RPH Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers who are great. They've got the spiritual understanding which helps us to connect with each other. I also go to Maddington Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service for my health checks and the doctors and staff are fantastic.

Since I have had the stent in and changed my habits to eating healthier foods and taking my medication, I have been able to manage my health very well. I am very happy with the outcome of my blood glucose levels, blood pressure and weight loss which has all contributed to getting my health back on track.



I am part of the RPH and Inner-City Aboriginal Health Community Advisory Group. I feel I have a lot to give, and I don't want to lie down in bed and live my life like that. These groups and events keep me motivated.

I catch the bus and train to my appointments or meetings because I get to see people and I like to strike up a conversation. It's a lovely connection.

My family are a great support network and are very watchful of me. I also have support from my church.

To me, healthy living means living my life in the right manner, the right way, and not having bad attitudes. Because attitudes not only pull you down but can affect other people as well.

We must move forward and have a good attitude and good thoughts, because I believe when you talk bitter, your body feels sick.

To have that wellbeing feeling in your body, you must speak in a way that will allow your whole being to feel good. We have a mind, body and spirit. Your body can be killed but not your spirit. The spirit lives forever and is important for Aboriginal people. That is why culture and religion is important for my health and wellbeing.

### Three tips to managing your health condition:

- Eat healthily, limit your sugar, salt and additive intake
- Give yourself permission to give love and feel love
- Finding alternative ways to exercise such as walking or running to catch public transport

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Aboriginal people are important and need to be heard.  
”







# DARRYL INDICH

I am living well after giving up drinking, which I did four years ago. Another way that I keep well is being with my family and enjoying the time with them. As I'm getting older, I like to spend more time with my grandkids as family is important to me.

I had a pacemaker put in during the 80s to help manage my heart health. I have attended Midland St John of God Hospital and Royal Perth Hospital. I go to Derbal Yerrigan Health Service to track my heart and general health progress. The services give me health information so I can continue to support my health journey at home.



My overall health has been good lately, since giving up drinking. I also walk to increase my physical activity as exercise is important for healthy living. I have been managing my health consistently and I seek help when I need it.

I have a lot of support from my family to manage my health. My wife cooks for me as healthy eating is one of main drivers for healthy living. I yarn regularly with my kids and grandkids to check in and see how everyone is going.

I want to enjoy my life and being healthy is key not only for myself but for my family.

**Three tips to managing your health condition:**

- Give up drinking alcohol
- Regular exercise
- Healthy eating

“  
**Keep healthy, keep out of trouble and listen to your Elders**  
 ”







# BARBARA MCGILLIVRAY

I have several chronic illnesses which include type 2 diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, bronchitis, sarcoidosis in my lungs and thyroid, asthma, deep vein thrombosis and heart disease. I have had diabetes for 15 years, asthma all my life and the rest of the illnesses for 5 years. I've also had childhood trauma since I was 6 years old – about 7 different traumas – which I didn't know about until I opened up and it all started coming back to me. With this trauma and other events that occurred in my adult life came a lot of mental health issues. Unconsciously, I threw myself into my work and put in 110%, which caused me to be destined for burnout and my health suffered as a result. Over time I came to realise something had to change and I started my healthy lifestyle journey.

My new outlook on life meant that, for me, if I want to be in this world I must look after myself and change my lifestyle to a healthy lifestyle. This started in 2015 when I joined the Heart Health Program – which has now ended– and now I attend the Healthy Lifestyle Program which includes exercise with a physiotherapist, health education and healthy cooking. I continued to add to my healthy lifestyle journey by attending Tai Chi classes, golf



therapy for balance, beach therapy, swimming classes and art therapy classes for my mental health wellbeing.

I use a lot of health services to support my health fitness. The services include Arche Health, Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service, Yorgum, Djinda Bridiya Elder's Wellbeing group, Moorditj Djena, East Metropolitan Health Service hospitals and the Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers who provide amazing support when I'm in the hospitals.

I am a part of the Aboriginal Health Community Advisory Group which has been great, as I feel I can contribute a lot and help guide the Aboriginal Health Strategy team on how the health services can engage and consult better, and be accessible to all Aboriginal people making it a safe environment to be in.

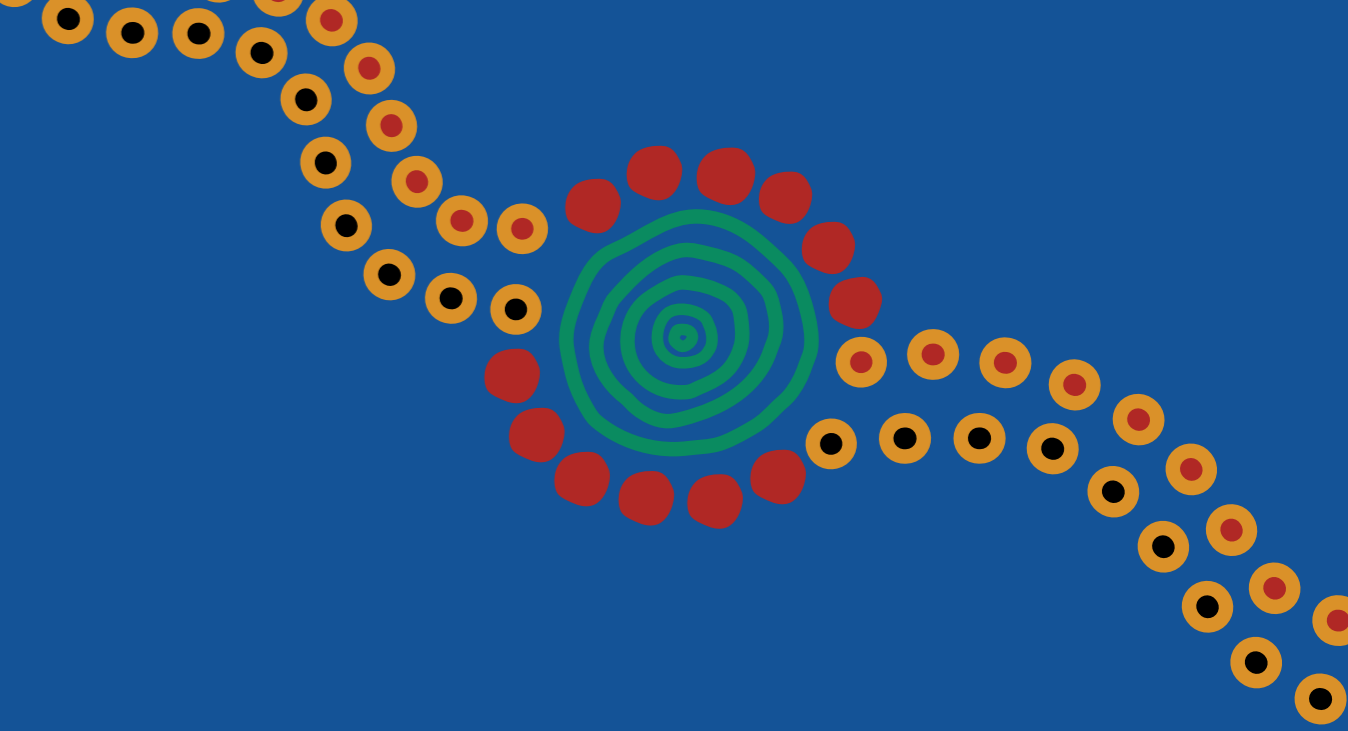
I am well supported in aged care and health services and community groups. I find the social activities are a great resource as everyone checks in with each other and provides support when we need it. I enjoy talking and teaching others about my culture as that helps me to maintain my cultural identity and connection, and continue the survival of our cultural languages. My culture is important to me and helps me along my health journey.

### Three tips to managing your health condition:

- Maintain a weekly diary of your health appointments, meetings and social activities
- Find what works for you to reduce your stress- exercise, being organised, art therapy
- Access health services to support your health and wellbeing

“  
Do not give up!  
”





# JAMES COLLARD

Growing up we didn't have much choice in what we ate. We just had the necessities; dad used to go out and get the kangaroo, and mum used to do the damper. To us, in a way, that was a traditional way of doing things. When I was younger, I never realised that I would get health conditions, especially when I was active and played a lot of footy – now there are some days where I am battling to move.

For the past 30 years I have had type 2 diabetes which I take injections for, and I have had kidney disease for the past 10 years in which I have needed to have gall stones removed.

Since having kidney disease, I have also had other problems occur, including high blood pressure. Once my blood pressure went up to 200BP and I thought I was going to die.

To manage my kidney health, I receive dialysis treatment at Armadale Health Service. I recently discovered I can get transport to my dialysis appointments through St John of God which was a role undertaken by my son for nearly nine years.

One time I was experiencing gall stone pain was so severe that I was rushed to Royal Perth Hospital



Emergency Department. The Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers from both hospitals were there, and it was great to know I can call on them if I need.

I also go to Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service to see an Aboriginal doctor for my general health. The chemist I see helps me with my medications and I have been able to manage my health, in particular getting my Haemoglobin levels and blood pressure within normal readings.

To help my health I gave up alcohol. A great motivator for me to give up drinking was that I wanted to live longer.

I exercise, whenever I can. This includes walking with my son, foot movement exercises and gardening.

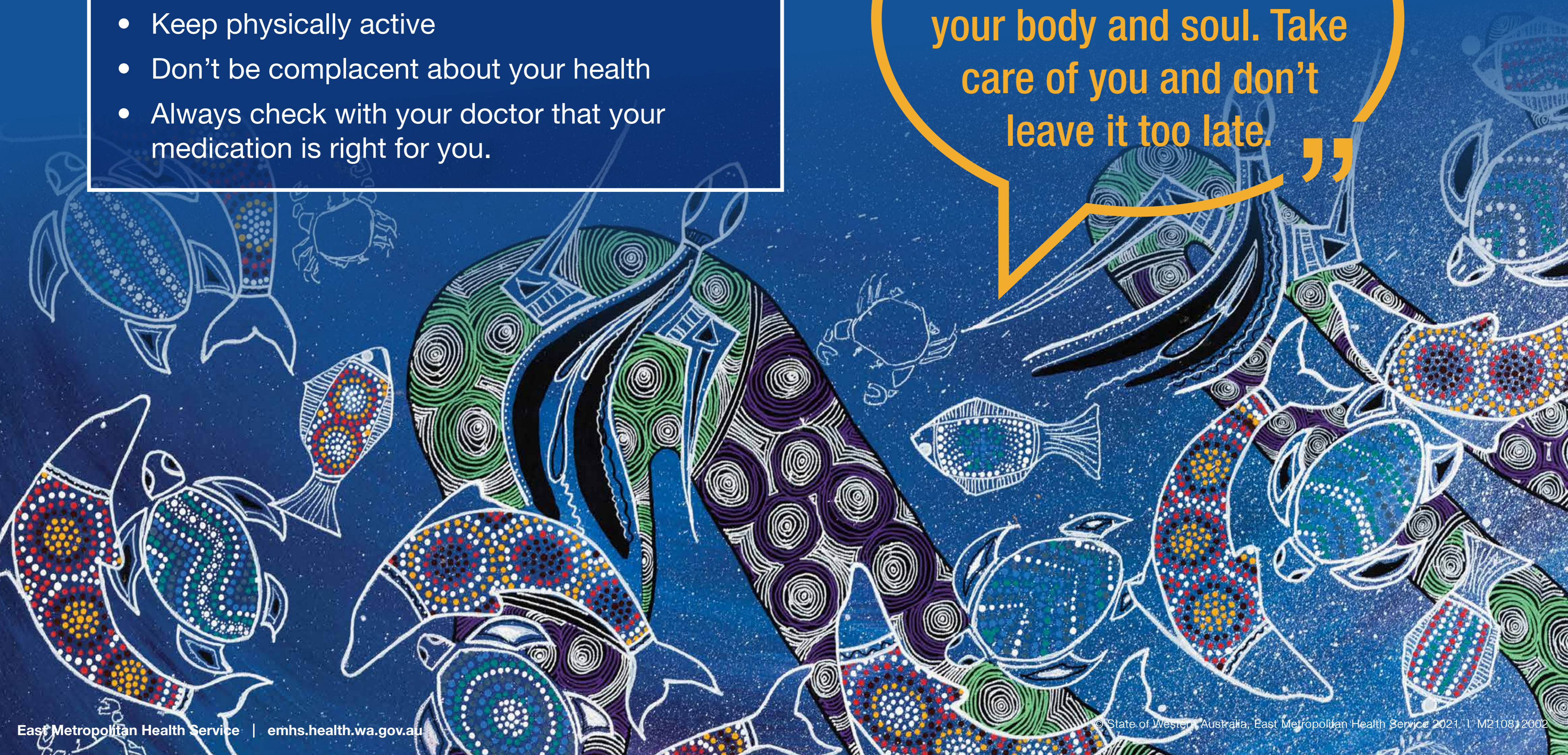
The main support I have from my family is my son, he's my caregiver. I also get support from my church. They come around and see if I'm okay and if I need anything.

For my spiritual health, I read my bible. It gives me support and helps me to stay focused as I want to be as healthy as I can. Religion has helped me a lot to move forward through my health journey

**Three tips to managing your health condition:**

- Keep physically active
- Don't be complacent about your health
- Always check with your doctor that your medication is right for you.

“  
**Throughout your life,  
 you have got to look after  
 your body and soul. Take  
 care of you and don't  
 leave it too late.**  
 ”







# NORMA GARLETT

I have had type 2 diabetes and thyroid disease for a long period of time, but have had kidney disease for the past three years.

To treat my kidney disease, I go to Armadale Health Service for dialysis treatment. While at Armadale Hospital, I also receive outreach services from Moordijit Djena podiatry service.

If I need help from the Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers, they are always available to come and see me. I also rely on Arche Health for my general health, and for transport for my husband and me to our specialist appointments.

I also receive support from Rise Health Group to help care for my husband.

It is good to know that when we need help, there are services available to help support us along our health journey.

I also get support from my family, especially from the grandchildren to help manage my health. They all come over to my house and sleepover and do things to help me. I have quite a lot of granddaughters who will often

cook meals for me, help me keep the house clean, and just be there for me with their children. It's like a two-way street, we get support from them and they get support from us.

I come from a family that always supports each other. Our grandmothers looked after the grannies, nieces and nephews as family connection is important. We didn't want the young ones being without family. In my role as a mother and grandmother I also take on these duties to help support my family and keep them on track and staying with family. Just being with family is great to connect and helps our wellbeing knowing we are all here for each other.

I yarn with the young ones to try and educate them about health so they can make better informed choices to avoid the same lifestyle that we currently live with due to our chronic illnesses.

I try to remain independent like catching the bus to go places. I enjoy walking and I encourage my husband to do the same thing as it's important to be physically active and keep moving.



## Three tips to managing your health condition:

- Get enough rest
- Be positive in your thinking and stay true to yourself
- Live a healthy lifestyle and cut down on salt and sugar intake

**Eat regularly and eat healthy foods**

